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C O M M U N I Q U E



Michael Mitchell

Michael Mitchell: Portfolio & Interview
Anne Noggle's Photographs: The Tragedy of Fallen Flesh

*James Alinder, ed.,
The Friends of Photography,
Carmel, California,
1982; 48 pp.;
38 black and white
photographs;
softcover*

The Friends of Photography continues its excellent publication record with the release of *The Contact Print*, thirtieth in an ongoing series of quarterly journals and major photographic monographs. Edited and with an introduction by James Alinder, this slim but very attractive volume (published to accompany an exhibit at the Friends of Photography Gallery) includes thirty-eight actual size reproductions of large-format contact prints by Harry Callahan, Linda Connor, Emmet Gowin, Nicholas Nixon, Olivia Parker, Michael A. Smith, Frederick Sommer, Josef Sudek, Brett Weston and Minor White. The introduction is adequate and careful; a brief biography of each photographer is included, the reproduction quality is outstanding and the selection of work is generally astute.

Interestingly, Frederick Sommer and Harry Callahan are the real stars of this particular collection. The Sommer reproductions include "The Furies", 1946; "Ondine", c. 1950; "Moon Culminations", 1951; and an untitled collage from 1977. Each image is brilliant and provocative and all are printed with Sommer's legendary attention to detail and tone value. Every square millimetre of print surface is completely thought-out and totally controlled, representing a level of intellectual complexity and virtuosity of execution that is extraordinary. Sommer may not be "the most important white man in North America", as he once boasted to a printing assistant, but he certainly is one of the continent's most important photographers, as is continually evidenced by

work such as this. Callahan's work is less complex but equally meaningful and the effectiveness of the images is not in the least reduced by their familiarity. "Eleanor", 1947; "Trees, Chicago", 1950; "Eleanor", 1952; and "Lake Michigan", 1953 are included here and each retains its freshness, immediacy and depth of feeling despite the fact that each has been before the public for three decades. It is a particular pleasure to see the famous "Trees, Chicago" and the 1952 "Eleanor" image reproduced full size and with such clarity and vigour.

Several other photographers also play major roles. Josef Sudek is represented by five images, a collection of gentle, sometimes elegiac, photographs, all in different formats. A sampling of Linda Connor's recent series on petroglyphs and pictographs in the western and southwestern U.S. is included and these photographs combine an interesting quality of contemplation and reflection with a sharp-edged precision (something relatively new for Connor). And Nicholas Nixon's 8 x 10 studies of people show a grab-shot spontaneity that is remarkable for the format in addition to the expected fine definition.

The Minor White images are a curious selection: the 1946 and 1948 street studies and a mediocre landscape from the "Amputations Series" of 1946 contrast awkwardly with the famous "Sun in Rock, Devil's Slide", 1947. Brett Weston's two images are technically stunning—they were made with an 11 x 14 camera—but are not among his best; and the same criticism could be applied to Emmet Gowin's work, which has been seen to better advantage (although not better reproduced) in other collections. Michael A. Smith is represented by three landscape photographs, and Olivia Parker by four of the still-life constructions for which she has become known; the work of these photographers is interesting but in each case the

selection lacks a certain dynamism.

Any serious large-format photographer should make a point of looking at *The Contact Print* (available in some bookstores as well as directly from The Friends of Photography in Carmel, California): the best work is inspiring and the collection is intelligent. A confirmed small-format addict might have mixed feelings, but couldn't help but respond to the elegance, sharpness and resonant tonality of these prints. The great era of view-camera photography may be over but, as this catalogue proves, there is still enough large-format work being done to interest anyone who cares about fine technique and thoughtful seeing.

Don Snyder

»» Another Way of Telling

John Berger and Jean Mohr
translation published
by Panther Books. New
York: Random House Inc.,
Garden City, 1962. 207 pp.,
illustrated. \$11.95.

Beyond an ironic John Berger is nothing if not provocative in his criticism. He sometimes makes sweeping generalizations, occasionally commits factual errors and can be mind-bogglingly dogmatic in his Marxist applications; yet he must be admired for the way he challenges conventional ways of examining art and the world.

In books like *Ways of Seeing* and *Along Looking*, he took on everything from advertising to sex, in doing so he looked at both painting and photography. In *Another Way of Telling*, however, he has concentrated exclusively on the photographic medium. He and his collaborator, Swiss photographer Jean Mühle, explain in the preface: "We wanted to make a book of photographs about the lives of mountain peasants.... We also wanted to produce a book about photography."

These books *do* function

Books 

man of selling with photographs. This book is a guidepost for a new theory of the photograph, but not the final destination.

Lois Allen

»»» ***A Dream of Riches— The Japanese Canadians 1877-1977***

The Japanese Canadian Centennial Project, Vancouver, 1978; 190 pp.; hardcover

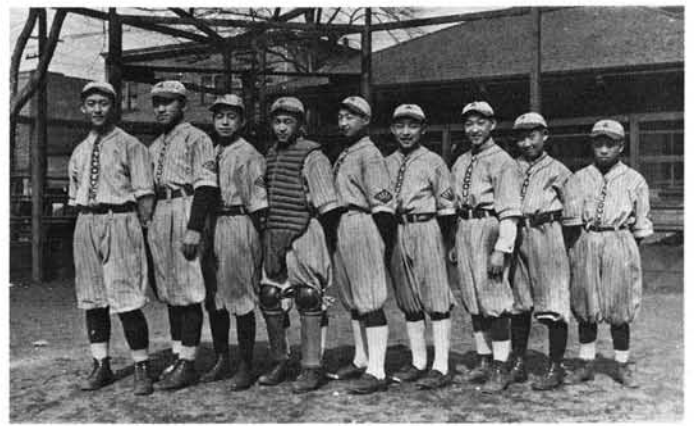
A Dream of Riches: The Japanese Canadians 1877-1977 was published in Vancouver by the Japanese Canadian Centennial Project to accompany a traveling photographic exhibition of the same name. This exhibition, which deals with the history of the Japanese people in Canada—with particular emphasis on the forced internment and relocation to which they were subjected during and immediately after World War II—recently made a return visit to Toronto and was on view at the Canadian Centre of Photography from May 27 through July 10.

The show makes a very strong impact. Although the titles are somewhat awkward ("We came from an ancient land with a dream of riches...", "We settled here, laboured and our communities grew", etc.) and the contemporary photographs are much less interesting—and seemingly less relevant—than those made before 1950, the images are well chosen and well utilized and the text supports and augments the imagery in appropriate fashion.

As one might expect from a collection of this sort, the pictures are by turns charming, stiff, poignant, descriptive, commonplace, graphic and sometimes appalling. The text (in English, Japanese and French) also varies, from naïve idealism to toneless narrative to chilling indictment. A good example of the latter is the following excerpt from an interview with Buck Suzuki:

I've had debates with people that piously talk about 'what a horrible thing it was that happened to you,' to happen to all the Japanese. I say what the hell are you talking about? You're about the same age as I am. I say, what did you do at that time? You were living in this area. You went and took part in it. You were part and parcel of it. You were part and parcel maybe by being silent and not speaking against it.¹

One can review both exhibit and book simultaneously (the book, although poorly reproduced, is virtually a complete catalogue of the show) by noting and commenting on the finer images—which are very fine—and discussing the finer points of text and context, format and design. Yet to talk about this collection of words and pictures in critical terms alone does not seem entirely correct. This exhibition was assembled for a specific reason: to make viewers and readers aware of the experiences of the Japanese in Canada, the extent of the injustice done to them as a result of government actions between 1942 and 1949 and the fact that although things seem to have returned to normal some years ago, all is not completely finished. The show pointedly includes many newspaper clippings about the aftermath of the World War II relocation and the clippings—which are reinforced by articles that have appeared elsewhere as recently as May of this year—make it clear that "unlike the Japanese in the United States, the Japanese-Canadians have yet to receive formal apologies or legal redress..."² A brochure accompanying the show speaks equally plainly: "The enabling legislation that destroyed the liberties of over 22,000 Japanese Canadians in 1942 was merely the culmination of a prevailing attitude of intolerance toward immigrant people. Both the attitude and the legislation, the War Measures



Below: Kim and Raye Nakashima, 1930s, Mission Farm Children with tame black bear cub



Act, remain with us today."

It seems appropriate to give thought to this issue at a time when the Nazi persecutions of World War II are being packaged as entertainment and relentlessly flogged by the television and film industries: witness *Holocaust*, *Mephisto*, *Our*

Hitler, *Sophie's Choice*—even *Das Boot* is representative of the same syndrome. The publishing industry also is getting into the act, as demonstrated by the recently-released *The Auschwitz Album*, a collection of concentration-camp photographs presented in a fine-

photography book format (!) or the fact that other books on Nazism still appear at a frightening rate.³ In the context of this media epidemic of material about one aspect of the war, it is fitting that *A Dream of Riches: The Japanese Canadians* should be given a major showing this year, for the statement it makes about another result of intolerance and prejudice during the same war is a lot more real—and a lot closer to home—than the experience could ever be of watching Meryl Streep with a short haircut move around a movie-set concentration camp.

Obviously one cannot too specifically compare the Canadian government's treatment, no matter how shameful, of the Japanese Canadians with what happened to the Jews in Europe: the orders of magnitude do not mesh. But it is only right that acknowledgment should be made and recognition should be given, and *A Dream of Riches* makes

a strong case for both. And it does so without fiction, without artifice, without advertising—and surprisingly, without rage.

Notes

1. Interestingly, the French translation eliminates the "maybe": "Vous y avez pris part. Vous en êtes complice et solidaire, sans doute par votre silence, parce que vous n'avez pas dit un mot."
2. Michael T. Kaufman, "Canada: An American Discovers Its Difference" in *The New York Times Magazine*, May 15, 1983, p. 84.
3. For example, the *Times Book Review* for July 10, the week this article was written, lists these four titles among new books reviewed: *Eichmann Interrogated*; *Exiled in Paradise: German Refugee Artists and Intellectuals in America, From the 1930's to the Present*; *Justice at Nuremberg*; and *The Muses Flee Hitler*: Cul-

tural Transfer and Adaptation, 1930-1945.

Don Snyder

»»» **New Neighbors, Old Friends: Morristown's Italian Community 1880-1980**

James V. Costanzo, Sr.,
The Morris County
Historical Society,
New Jersey, 1982; 177 pp.;
softcover

"Oh, no," I thought when I first picked up *New Neighbors, Old Friends*, "another snapshot collection posing as ethnic history." Some weeks later, my opinion is rather different: this book has a lot to say.

Subtitled *Morristown's Italian Community 1880-1980*, this volume was collected from family albums by James V. Costanzo, Sr. It has an excellent introduction by Dr. Francesco Cordasco of Montclair (N.J.) State College, and is pub-

lished by the Morris County Historical Society of Morristown, New Jersey. The title describes the contents pretty well and the photographs themselves are what one would expect—some are terrific, many are mediocre and the reproductions are unfortunately too light. But the cumulative effect of looking at so many proud faces is strangely moving, and the fact that the book deals with one specific community as a microcosm of Italian immigrant life (rather than trying to achieve a wider cross section which would dilute this effect though it might make for more impressive individual images) represents a sensible editorial decision.

In addition to the fact that the photographs' human qualities linger in the mind so long, another impressive aspect of this book is the text. Not that it's great writing; just that it has an effect. Again, certain aspects are predictable but what stays in the mind are the

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unspectacular but solid attributes of Morristown's Italians: strength, adaptability, real appreciation for the opportunities provided by North America, an incredible—in the me-generation 1980s, an unthinkable—capacity for work and a total commitment to family and community. Page after page of recollections about long hours and early working conditions—descriptions without the faintest trace of self-pity—make remarkable reading. Plentiful descriptions of family life and its importance, made without sentimentality or exaggeration, make contemporary North American family life seem forced and anemic. And the fact that North America owes important aspects of its culture to the presence of immigrant peoples is made abundantly clear, without ever being stated directly, by both photographs and text.

New Neighbors, Old Friends will correct many assumptions and put certain contemporary values in a different context. It provides much information, of local origin but universal applicability, and will return much human experience: if you can find a copy, give it more than a casual glance.

Don Snyder

»»» *Los Amhulantes: The Itinerant Photographers of Guatemala*

Ann Neal and Ann Parker.
MIT Press, Cambridge.
Mass., 1982, 149 pp.,
colour and duotone plates.
hardcover, U.S. \$35.

Itinerant photographers are nearly as old as photography. They follow the tradition of the street artist who appeals to vanity and our commitment to posterity for a lifetime no matter how bad it may be. Unlike their studio counterparts, the itinerants keep few records, let alone collections of negatives. A study of their methods is therefore hampered by a lack of documentation and must rely on other sources

or techniques.

Like oral historians who seek out and create their own records of the lower and middle classes who leave few or no real traces of their existence, Ann Parker utilized her own skills as a photographer to portray the work of Guatemala's itinerants, *los amhulantes*. Her approach, while resembling that of an ethnographer recording with a camera, is widely visual and little can be inferred of the itinerant history purely through the photographs. The text by Ann Neal, Parker's husband, provides the necessary bridge between vision and word.

Parker first saw *los amhulantes* one day in the spring of 1971 in a marketplace and spent several years with her husband recording various facets of their work. Parker's and Neal's collaborative effort, the result is, in one of the more unusual photographic books that crosses disciplines.

The history of itinerant photography in Guatemala is not the purpose of Neal's text; rather it centres on current practices which have their roots in several decades of experience by what amounts to a guild-like group of craftsmen. There are no women in the trade, at least none are mentioned by Neal and all the photographers photographed by Parker are men.

Guatemala's itinerants, one of the largest such groups left in the photographic world, make their living by following the various secular and religious fairs. Neal estimates 150 such photographers in Guatemala, some of whom travel as far afield as Mexico. He notes that *los amhulantes* are divided into two geographic groups: the Occidentals who work in the western highlands and the Oriente who cover the eastern lowlands. There are also about 40 street and park photographers who live in Guatemala City and sometimes travel to the fairs.

Although their equipment is primarily antiquated and constructed out of older cam-